2.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment was inventoried as part of preparing the FAP 340, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation (1996 FEIS). This Chapter updates that inventory. All resource categories inventoried in the 1996 FEIS are addressed. Only substantive change occurring to those resources since publication of the 1996 FEIS are documented. In the case where no substantive change to a resource category has occurred, the reader is referred to the 1996 FEIS, Affected Environment. Likewise, the full text of the Draft SEIS is not repeated within this Final SEIS but rather summarized and referenced by blue underlined hotlink text. For electronic versions, click on the hotlink to view the referenced text.

2.1 Project Corridor

The Project Corridor is located within northwestern Will County, with small portions extending into southern DuPage and southwestern Cook Counties (Exhibit 2-1). Over 70 percent of the Project Corridor is located within Will County. The Project Corridor crosses ~~twelve~~ thirteen municipal and township political subdivisions, the largest being the City of Joliet (77,217) and the Village of Lemont (40,843). Subsequent to publication of the Draft SEIS, the number of political subdivisions increased to thirteen as a result of the incorporation of over 50 percent of Homer Township into the Village of Homer Glen.

Other political subdivisions include DuPage, Lockport, Joliet, New Lenox and Homer Townships in Will County, as well as the western two-thirds of Lemont Township in Cook County and the southern one half of Downers Grove Township in DuPage County. These political subdivisions range in population from 20,000 to 77,000.

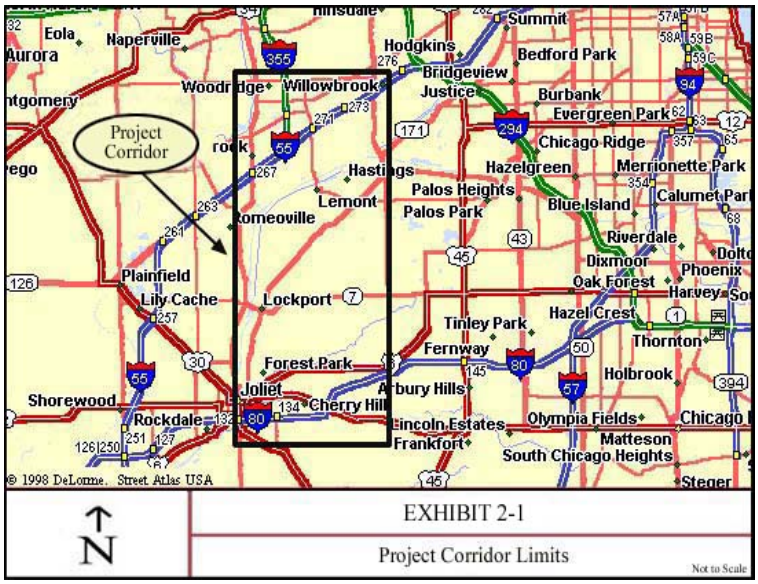
The Project Corridor is experiencing rapid growth. Market forces including competitive housing prices and proximity to the Chicago central area and suburban job centers are driving this growth. The location, type and density of this growth is regulated by local land use plans and zoning and is proceeding in a manner consistent with local priorities. Refer to the Draft SEIS and 1996 FEIS, Section 2.3.1 for additional Project Corridor background.

2.2 Transportation Facilities

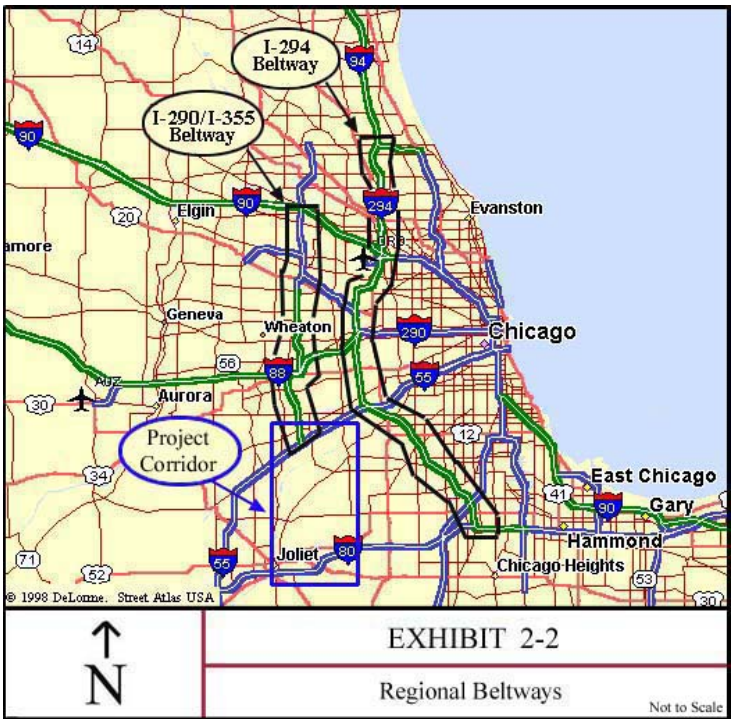
2.2.1 Roadway Facilities

Existing Roadway Facilities

Expressways in the Chicago region are oriented in a radial network to accommodate travel demand to and from the City of Chicago. Two circumferential beltways interconnect this radial system. The first beltway, I-294 is located an



approximate radial distance of 24 kilometers (15 miles) from downtown Chicago. The second beltway, I-290/I-355, is located a radial distance of 39 kilometers (24 miles) from the City of Chicago (Exhibit 2-2). These beltways serve circumferential traffic demand primarily in the north-south direction and through trips seeking to bypass congestion in the downtown area.



In the vicinity of the Project Corridor, there are two radial interstates that provide access to downtown Chicago. These interstates, I-55 and I-80, define the north and south limits of the Project Corridor. I-55 is connected to the I-290/I-355 beltway at the north limit of the Project Corridor. I-80 at the south limit of the Project Corridor is not connected to the I-290/I-355 beltway. This causes adverse travel for traffic from the east. Westbound interstate traffic on I-55 and I-80 wishing to proceed in a north/south direction within the Project Corridor must either continue past the Project Corridor to the I-55/I-80 junction located 8.0 kilometers (5.0 miles) west of the City of Joliet or use the non-continuous local roadway network.

The local roadway network consists predominately of two-lane roads of varying quality spaced on a 0.8 to 1.6 kilometer (0.5 to 1.0 mile) grid (Exhibit 2-3). The local network provides no direct north-south travel route. Two routes using Gougar Road and Cedar Road to State Street/Lemont Road are the most direct routes for north-south travel. Both are non-continuous and provide limited capacity.

Bridge crossings over the Des Plaines River for north-south travel are limited. The river acts as a barrier and the limited number of bridge crossings reduces Project Corridor access. Refer to the Draft SEIS and 1996 FEIS, Section 2.2.1 for further detail regarding the existing roadway network.

Proposed Roadway Facilities

No-Action (Baseline) Alternative maintains existing roadways, includes roadway capacity improvements, transit upgrades, and TSM/TDM strategies in the 2020 RTP and current programs*, minus the proposed transportation system improvement. The No-Action (Baseline) Alternative was developed in close coordination with area transportation

* Using the best available information in the early spring of 1999, which was the 1998-2002 TIP